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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 005299

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [OFDP](#) [PINR](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: HOC CHIEF / UNOFFICIAL KUWAITI AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ
ON RELATIONS WITH IRAQ AND HOC DEVELOPMENTS

REF: A. 05 KUWAIT 5130
[1](#)B. 05 KUWAIT 4905

Classified By: DCM Matthew Tueller for reason 1.4 (b)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Lt General Ali Hassan Al-Mu'min, former Kuwaiti military Chief of Staff, current head of the Humanitarian Operations Center (HOC) and the GOK's unannounced choice for Ambassador to Iraq (reftel), told the DCM during a December 28 meeting that Kuwait will not "make the first move" in announcing an Ambassador to Iraq, opting to wait until the GOI announces its representative in Kuwait. He said that Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammad Al-Sabah had offered him the idea of being named as the non-resident Kuwaiti Ambassador to Iraq and staying in Kuwait but that he declined, telling the FM that he would prefer to do the job from Baghdad. General Ali said that the ideal situation would be for the Kuwaiti mission to Iraq to be set up in the Green Zone, under protection of U.S. security forces, or with an "American security environment." General Ali said that he would also continue with his work for the HOC, praised the American military staff assigned to the HOC, and asked that they remain with him for the time being. He offered his general views on Iraq, a brief history of the HOC's operations, and a summary of his recent work in identifying Kuwaiti POW remains in Iraq. End Summary.

General Ali Confirms His Unofficial Job

[1](#)2. (C) In a December 28 meeting with the DCM, Lt General Ali Hassan Al-Mu'min, former Kuwaiti military Chief of Staff and current head of the Humanitarian Operations Center (HOC), confirmed his standing as the number one choice to be named Kuwaiti ambassador to Iraq (reftel). He said that the GOK "wants representation in Iraq," and "wants Iraq to be free and prosperous." He said that Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah offered him the idea of staying in Kuwait but being named as the non-resident Kuwaiti ambassador to Iraq, but that he turned this offer down, saying that he would rather do the job from Baghdad.

"We Have Many Friends, But We Also Have Many Enemies"

[1](#)3. (C) Explaining the delay in establishing a diplomatic presence in Baghdad he quoted Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah, saying that the Minister told him, "I can't send the sons of Kuwait to be killed in Iraq." General Ali said that he thinks that "the GOK will wait to make the first move" and not name a diplomat to Baghdad until the GOI names its representative to Kuwait. "Any Kuwaiti diplomat

would be the prime target (of the insurgents)" General Ali said. "We Kuwaitis have a lot of friends (in Iraq)," he added, "but we also have many enemies."

¶4. (C) General Ali said that any Kuwaiti embassy or mission opened in Baghdad would need to have an "American security environment" or something similar. He said that it would ideally be located "in or near the American compound" and have the same security protection. For his current trips in and out of Baghdad, he explained, he travels with the American military staff. "With regular transport and security", he said, "we could open an Embassy." The DCM emphasized that, with the recent elections putting in place a permanent Iraqi government, now is the time to establish full diplomatic representation.

Kuwait Is "Stuck With The HOC" For Now

¶5. (SBU) General Ali explained that when the HOC first was established, the GOK thought it would operate for "three to six months." Three years later, he said, the HOC is still in operation and still is needed, and he has a feeling, he said, that Kuwait "is stuck with the HOC" for some time. "We cannot disband the HOC," he explained, "until all the NGOs can operate within Iraq." He admitted that "Kuwait is a hard place to do business for an NGO, they need our help." General Ali said that he sees himself as a "gap-filler," helping out when needed. He said that he receives his authority for HOC operations from the Council of Ministers but he falls under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an arrangement he described as "confusing at times."

¶6. (SBU) General Ali said that his recent efforts with the

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HOC were focused on making sure that aid donations are evenly distributed throughout Iraq and not just in the south. He said that he has authorized HOC funds to be provided to the Kuwait Red Crescent Society to purchase humanitarian supplies and move them to Iraq, and that he has worked with other Kuwaiti charities to create "action groups" to carry out aid activities in Iraq.

¶7. (SBU) General Ali praised the American military staff that work with him, saying that they have also helped to secure donations of surplus relief supplies from the U.S. military. He said that the American military staff were also very helpful in the medical treatment cases, where the HOC matches up Iraqi children needing extensive medical procedures with American and European medical institutes willing to provide the services for free. Finally, he said, the HOC has helped to repatriate many Iraqis that were living overseas and wished to return to Iraq.

Aid For Iraq: "Don't Let This Money Rot in Kuwait's Banks"

¶8. (C) According to General Ali, the Iraqis have been "too busy with security, elections and other interior issues" to make decisions about aid, specifically the \$60 million held by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and committed to health and education projects. He said that Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari "had made a move" towards getting the aid money disbursed, and that there have been "other recent discussions." He said that the Iraqi idea for the healthcare portion of the aid (\$30 million) was originally to build storage facilities, but now the money would be used for a combination of clinics, healthcare services, and storage facilities. General Ali said that Kuwaiti Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah told him to tell previous Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi: "Don't let this money rot in Kuwait's banks, come get this aid."

Other Thoughts On Iraq

¶9. (SBU) General Ali said that Saddam Hussein "did the Iraqi people a favor by being such a tyrant." It forced many of the Iraqi people to go overseas where they were educated, and now these educated Iraqis were coming back to help in the reconstruction of their country, he explained. He lamented the current state of Iraq: "So much wealth, but it's always wasted." "So much military might, but it's also wasted because of a lack of trust," he added. "I was the first enemy of Iraq," he said, "but now I feel sorry for them." He said that, in the end, he was optimistic about Iraq. "We've put our eggs in the American basket," he admitted, "you'd better succeed."

Still Working On POW Issues

¶10. (C) The search for the remains of Kuwaiti POWs taken in the first Gulf War is still preoccupying the General's time, he explained, with a number of recent trips to Baghdad, and more planned for the next few months. He said that he was "not really happy to be working on this," but that "the families of the POWs" want him involved. He did not seem very hopeful for finding anything, noting that "if you have too many captains you sink the ship, and the POW ship has already sunk." He said, though, that "as a Kuwaiti national, when asked, you must get involved." He said that he has been very suspicious about Iraqis providing information on POW remains in the past, but that recent information has come to light which he considers reliable. He said that Iraqi PM Jaafari "had high hopes" that some POW remains could be returned, because he "wanted to show Kuwait a good face." He said that on his next trip to Baghdad, planned for mid-January, he should be able to take back some bone samples for DNA testing. He said that his focus was on POW remains and that he and others involved in the search "don't believe there is a live Kuwaiti POW in Iraq."

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LeBaron